ON GRAPE CULTURE.

SOME FACTS ABOUT CALIFORNIA'S GROWING INDUSTRY.

Great Wide Green Fields of Grapes. Little Left to Will or Nature—"Slips" or "Cuttings"—A Well Trimmed Vineyard—Gathering the Fruit.

I am going to set down some facts about grapes and this very great industry which I have come across out here in the California vineyards. In the first place, it may not be generally known that we gather two crops a year out here from the most of our vines. But this is the case. It seems strange to see the great wide green fields of grapes still continue green, as green as it is possible for green to be, all the season through, without a drop of water, and go right on and blossom and bear a second crop so soon as the first one is gathered; and it is a fact to store up in your memory and set down to the credit of California.

There are perhaps fifty kinds of vines here; maybe I could safely double that number. But the most popular grape is a Hungarian variety. We use no Spanish vines now except the hardy and honest old "mission grape." And where the mission grape came from no one now can tell. Of course it is of Spanish origin, brought here by the monks; but it is not to be found in any part of Spain now This, the mission grape, which was for many years the only kind of grape grown in California, is not used for wine-making at all now, nor is it grown to any great extent. But it is a good table grape, and the few remaining vineyards of this variety are devoted to the table and to the making of brandy.

The great improvement in California wines within the last few years is due largely to the improvement in the plant. It would only lead to confusion, and few would care to read the long list of rare grapes that you almost daily here about here in the heart of the greatest grape land in the world, and so I will not give the names, but the search for rare and suitable grapes is zealous and persistent all over the world. Men are kept constantly traveling in Europe and Asia seeking new varieties.

MODERN GRAPE CULTURE.

The vermin which attacked and destroyed the vines of France is a sort of louse which destroys the root of the vine. It has made its appearance in California, but its advance has been checked, and its further progress is not greatly feared. Still, it is conceded that the Californias who claimed to have discovered a certain remedy, and secured a patent for the same, has not yet received the millions which France and Italy offered as a reward. I may mention that when the panic incident to the appearance of the vermin in the grape fields here was at its height the grape growers resorted to the Missouri grapes, with good results. The louse does not attack American vines, only imported ones.

But there is little left to the will or the nature of the vine in modern grape culture. You will have to tear down all the clambering vines which the old Greeks loved to picture on their vases or in their poems. There is little left that is poetic in the grape here. There is nothing that is even beautiful except this one broad sea of green, and this is beautiful indeed when brought into sharp contrast with the yellow and russet and tawny old lion-like hills which tower up and hang high over these emerald seas of vine.

"The grape is not raised from either the seed or root, but from "slips" or "cuttings" like the cane in the southern states. You can cut off almost any part of a grapevine and stick it in the ground, give it anything like half a chance, and in less than three years it will be clinging to rock or stump, brier or bush, anything that is nearest, covering up with its wonderously beautiful leaves and tendrils all the hard angles and ugly features of whatever it clings to, trying its best to make this beautiful world still more beautiful. Another evidence of its sweet femininity. But after this "cutting" has taken root and had one or two years of leisure and liberty in the nursery, it is dug up and set in regimental line, no more to run riot or grow and reach out and cling, and cover up the follies and the faults of others.

A WELL TRIMMED VINEYARD.

These cuttings are now planted about as wide apart—one in each hill—as corn in the great corn fields of the west. And it is at once cut down almost to the ground. As I said before, you must abandon all your old picture ideas founded on Bible tales or traditions from profane history. For the grape in California is permitted to be only a stump. Every year it is shorn down almost to the ground. Out yonder in the almost shoreless sea of green grapevines you can find stumps of grape trees almost as thick as your body. But the vines are only of this year's growth. A well trimmed vineyard in California, after the last crop is gathered, looks exactly like a field of stumps in a clearing.

Not much romance or beauty about that. But there is plenty of money and this is the way that pays best, and poetry must yield to utility.

How much will one acre yield? Well in Napa valley they show you a field that yields fourteen tons of grapes to the acre. But this is an extraordinary yield. From eight to ten tons is the average crop. These grapes are sold by the ton. They are sometimes sold as they stand; sometimes they are sold on delivery at some wine press. They bring from $20 to $30 per ton, according to the yield, as a rule.

The prettiest and cleanest employment I ever saw is that of gathering grapes. But it is hard on the back, and in the end is not easy work. Of course, the ugly stumps are entirely hidden by the vines long before harvest time. Indeed, the thousand vines and tendrils and blossoms that branch out from the little black stump in the earliest days of spring have long before harvest time completely covered every inch of ground with vines and leaves and tendrils that reach almost to your waist. And the stump is one solid mass of luscious grapes. They are all there clinging to the stump, not scattered about over the ground on the long vines that are to be shorn away. But you begin to feel down in the dense mass of leaves and tendrils for your stump, and at every stump you find a little cartload of grapes.

But, alas, notwithstanding all I can say or do, I fear my fellow laborer will cling to the dirty alleys of the dismal cities, hug his hatred of those who have toiled and braved danger and made life a success. He prefers the pesthouse for his children to the green grapefields and the sweet air of the roomy west.—Joaquin Miller in The Chicago Times.

The "Kroomassie" Garden Patch.

The old Dutch settlers gave very curious names to the various parts of New York city. Far up town there was a garden patch bounded by streams and ravines which they called the Kroomassie, or shocknife, from its resemblance to the shape of that instrument. The time came when the Kroomassie was covered by a dense population, and its original name became modernized into Gramercy park—the latter being a pretty little enclosure where nature struggles with all the disadvantages of a surrounding wilderness of brick and mortar.—New York Letter.

NEW YORK'S RIVER THIEVES.

Four Distinct Types of Aquatic Robbers. A Dangerous Man to Meet.

The stronghold of the river thieves is never permanent. It is transferred from point to point as often as the elusion of the police is necessary, and one day it may be in a dilapidated hut on a lonely spit of sand washed by the sea, and on the next under one of the unfrequented piers uptown in New York. Living anywhere—among his friends one moment, and with his enemies the next; "roughing it" in an open boat one night and officiating as a ward politician, dressed in an envious contrast to the laboring men of his district, the evening following; sleeping under a junk dealer's counter or in a Cherry street garret—his is a life of rapid contrasts. He is unquestionably a lower type of the genius thief than the adroit burglar who enters our houses. Yet he is gifted with a precocity, which, in the successful river pirate, becomes instinctive. This aquatic species of the genus thief is divided into four types.

1. The "morning riser" and "sun downer" sneaks around the wharves between daylight and darkness, morning and evening, and steals whatever is left unwatched for a few moments. He never uses a boat, and is the lowest type.

2. The "greaser," always in company with one or more of his class, prowls around the docks in a boat, and, to use the language of the police, is "on the dead steal." He will take anything and resort to any desperate alternative to escape capture. He is the most dangerous scoundrel on the river, and the very worst type the law has to deal with.

3. The "square" belongs to a gang which is known "among the trade" as the "Catamarket club." He usually effects an understanding with the mates and crews of vessels and buys what they have stolen—or "broached," in the language of "the trade"—from the cargo during the voyage. He belongs to the largest and most contemptible type.

4. The "cabin thief" is a cunning and adroit burglar, who enters the cabins of vessels by picking the locks, removing a pane of glass or chloroforming the inmates. He always operates with a companion, who remains in the boat. He will not condescend to steal sailcloth or rope, but carries off watches, ships' chronometers and money. He avoids the junk store, the powerful ally of the river thief, as a rule, and deals only with a regular "fence." He is the aristocratic and beau ideal type—a dangerous man to meet anywhere, under any circumstances.—Brooklyn Eagle.

A Talk With a Plater.

"I gold, silver or nickel plate anything from a lady's pin to a brass watch," said a plating mechanic to a reporter. "Gold plating is cheap nowadays, as compared with former years. What are the principal articles plated? Watches, rings and other articles of jewelry. I will put a gold plate on a watch, guaranteed for a year, for $3.50, and not so good a plate for $2. Rings cost 25, 35 and 50 cents each to plate with gold. If you will step this way I will show how plating is done."

The reporter's informant led the way to a rear room containing a dozen electric batteries, to which were attached thin steel wires. On a bench were small cups containing liquid gold, silver and nickel. The gold used is twenty-four karats fine. To illustrate the process the operator took a silver ring, and, after washing it in a preparation, twined one of the wires attached to the batteries around it. The electricity was then turned on and the ring dipped in the liquid gold. Instantly the ring assumed a bright red color, and this was succeeded by a golden hue. In less than two minutes the ring was taken out with a sufficient gold plate to last a year, or at least so said the operator. Spoons, knives and forks, and in fact everything imaginable, are plated in the manner described. There is big money in the business, as but little gold is used in the plating process.

"I can so heavily plate a watch that acid won't touch it," said the plater. "Bogus or heavily gold plated watches are frequently palmed off by unscrupulous jewelers on customers. Confidence men often find a plated watch a means of earning a dollar when times are dull. Two months ago I plated a silver watch, probably originally worth $10, for a customer, and charged him $5 for the job. A week or so ago he called on me and said that he had pawned that identical watch in a Brooklyn pawnshop for $40. No doubt the watch was plated heavier in some places than in others, and in case the pawnbroker tested the watch, which is unlikely, he did so on the heavily plated parts."—Brooklyn Eagle.

The Cabins of Northern Ireland.

I find the cabins of the laborers in the north of Ireland a little better than those of the south. Some of them have slate roofs, but altogether they are poor affairs. I hear of land here being rented for $25 an acre per year on long leases, and it is a wonder to me how the farmers can pay the rent and live. A Minnesota traveler tells me he has an Irish son-in-law, who has just rented twenty acres at $45 per acre, at auction, and that the man who rented it calculated that the crop would pay the rent and he would have the straw for his profits. "Straw," said this man, "is worth from $5 to $10 a ton here, and that will enable him to make something off the investment."

This gentleman remarked upon the injury which Ireland would receive through the shipping into England of Australian meat. Said he: "I saw Australian mutton selling in London for five cents a pound, and I understand that a ship lately arrived with a cargo of 60,000 frozen sheep. These sheep are killed in Australia, and are carried to England in refrigerators. Australia is the great sheep country of the world, and it has about eighteen sheep to every inhabitant. America has less than one sheep to each inhabitant. If American meat has hurt Ireland, Australian meat will do it the greater damage."—Frank G. Carpenter in Cleveland Herald.

The Light From Foliage.

Dr. Gorham has discovered that the light reflected from green leaves consists chiefly of red and green rays, and by ascertaining the proportions of these colors reflected from leaves, and taking a revolving ring with the like proportions of color on it, he has been able to mix these colors as it were in the eye and reproduce the tint of the leaves. He found during the inquiry, however, that the simple colors did not exactly reproduce the color of the leaf required, but that a certain admixture of black was necessary to this end. Black, it may be remarked, is well known to exist in the cellular structure of leaves in the form of carbon. It is deposited there, as is believed, from the absorption of carbonic acid gas from the atmosphere by the stomata or mouths on the under side of the leaf.—Boston Budget.

Louisville's Colored People.

Louisville has 40,000 colored people, many of whom are prosperous, and some of whom are rich. Some of the best real estate in the city is owned by colored men; there are three or four large furniture dealers, and many coal yards, groceries and saloons are owned by negroes.—New York Sun.

No Correct Map.

After expending $8,000,000 in surveys, it is to be expected that a country of the magnitude of the United States should have a correct map, yet it is without a single one.